REMARKS

The three-month period for responding to the last Office Action expired on January 6, 2006. A Request for a One-Month Extension of Time and the associated fee are enclosed herewith. Accordingly, this Amendment is timely filed.

Also enclosed is a Request for Continued Examination and the associated fee. Therefore, entry and full consideration of this Amendment are respectfully requested.

By this Amendment, claims 1, 3 and 7 are being amended to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the invention, and new claims 12-16 are being added. Claims 1-16 remain in this case.

In the last Office Action, claims 1-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph as allegedly indefinite because of inclusion of the phrase "special-purpose functional assembly". This phrase has been deleted from all of the claims and replaced by the term "pressure control component". The latter term is believed to be clear and definite and includes such structures as cocks, valves, pressure regulators and other electropneumatic pressure control devices. Accordingly, the Examiner is requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

Claims 1-10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) or (e) as allegedly anticipated by Hilberer (U.S. Patent 6,540,308) and under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as allegedly anticipated by Beck (U.S. Patent 6,276,761), Blanz (U.S. Patent 5,678,900), EP 0689117 or EP 083183. These rejections, to the extent that they may be deemed applicable to the claims as now presented, are respectfully, but most strenuously traversed.

In all of the applied references, compressed air at a supply pressure is provided to remote control valves or other dispersed pressure control components which are in the direct vicinity of the actuator(s) of the parking brake system. These remote control valves provide the variable control pressure to the actuator(s).

In contrast, in the present invention, the variable control pressure provided to the remote parking brake system actuator(s) is generated in the unitary compressed air treating device in the direct vicinity of the compressor. In other words, in the present invention, a centralized unitary compressed air treating device and associated electronic command and control unit directly controls not only a service brake system but also the actuator(s) of a parking brake system, and, preferably pneumatic actuator(s) of a pneumatic suspension system or other auxiliary system.

Thus, the various electropneumatic components such as the electrically operated valves that supply the parking brake actuator(s) are incorporated into the single air treatment device of the present invention which is situated on the outlet side of the compressor, and are no longer, as they were in the prior art, spread throughout the vehicle.

In this way, the electropneumatic components involved in managing the parking brake system are gathered together at one single place within the air treatment device connected to the compressor, making maintenance operations easier and bringing uniformity to the command and control logic. Because all of the controls for the various electropneumatic components are incorporated into one and the same device, the supervision of the pneumatic system as a whole is improved, and diagnostic and maintenance operations are made easier. The approach of the present invention affords numerous other advantages including:

an improvement in the reliability and a reduction in the air leaks by reducing the number of components and pneumatic connections employed in using the pneumatic power;

an improvement in safety associated with the possibilities of diagnosing and managing the degraded modes of the pneumatic circuit;

an improvement in the options for managing and auxiliary functions by virtue of the use of a command and control unit centralized to the air treatment device;

a reduction of the cost of the system by virtue of the modular architecture of the air treatment device; and

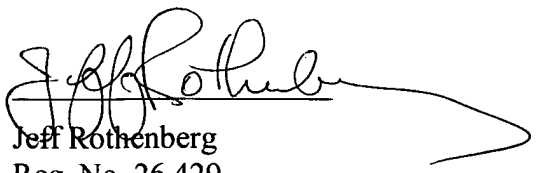
ease of evolution and of customization of the system to suit a different range of vehicles.

The applied references all employ a distributed pneumatic control system and thus fail to teach the unitary compressed air treating device of the present invention or realize the benefits afforded thereby.

For all of the above reasons, the claims pending in this application are believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested.

If, after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner continues to entertain any reservations, he is cordially requested to contact Applicant's representative at the below indicated telephone number to resolve same.

Respectfully submitted,



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